

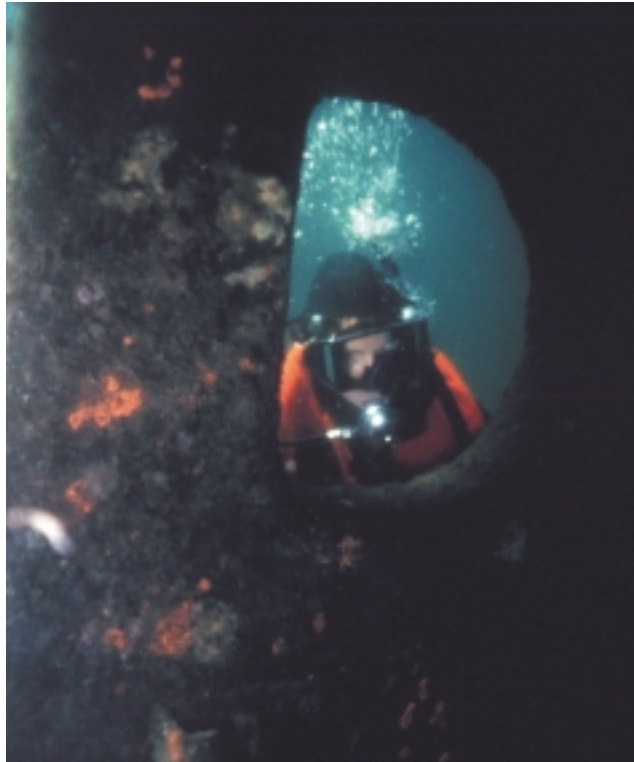
## Office of the State Archaeologist

The Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA), Michigan Historical Center, records, investigates, interprets and protects Michigan's archaeological sites. Archaeological sites contain physical remains of almost 15,000 years of human occupation in the state. Written records cover only about 2 percent of our history; the rest must be gleaned from oral history and physical traces left by Michigan's earlier inhabitants.

Our lands include thousands of Native American settlements and burial sites, as well as French and British outposts, nineteenth century logging camps, mines and homesteads. Beneath the waters of the Great Lakes, there are shipwrecks and other remains documenting the maritime trade.

Archaeologists, property owners, divers and others regularly report sites to the OSA, which is the central repository of archaeological information for our state. Every state has a state archaeological site file, and the OSA provides this service for Michigan. Our records include 18,000 sites on land, and 1400 shipwrecks. These records constitute the most comprehensive collection of books, unpublished reports, and documents on Michigan archaeology in our state.

Artifacts are important sources of information about the past. Those collected from archaeological sites are especially important, because they are associated with information about soils, other artifacts, radiocarbon dates,



and structural features. By statute, the OSA is responsible for caring for artifacts found on state lands and Great Lakes bottomlands. Many individuals have donated artifacts from private collections. At present, the OSA houses collections from over 1000 sites and shipwrecks. The collections are used for research, exhibits, and loans to museums. Our storage facility is among the few in the state that meet federal standards for archaeological curation.

The OSA plays a key role in studying and caring for archaeological sites on state lands and Great Lakes bottomlands. The office conducts small scale excavations in state parks. The staff dons diving gear to inspect shipwrecks. Staff also visit sites on state lands to assist

agencies such as the Michigan Department of Natural Resources with management concerns. When funds are available, the OSA supports university field schools on state lands, and works with the State Historic Preservation Office to provide grants for archaeological projects. The staff also uses artifact collections and written records to conduct research on archaeological topics.

The OSA interprets the past for the public through exhibits, oral presentations and publications. The office provides artifacts and expertise to assist the Michigan Historical Museum with exhibits in its museums around the state. Artifacts are loaned to other Michigan museums for temporary and long-term exhibits. Staff members speak at schools, public meetings, and archaeological conferences. They also write articles and reports for professional and public audiences. The State Archaeologist has edited a comprehensive book on Michigan archaeology, *Retrieving Michigan's Buried Past: The Archaeology of the Great Lakes State*. On our annual Archaeology Day, professional and avocational archaeologists come to the Michigan Historical Museum from around the state to present table displays, give lectures, and chat informally with the public.

The OSA fulfills the archaeological functions required of the State Historic Preservation Office by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (as amended). This work includes reviewing projects using federal or state assistance to assess possible impacts on archaeological resources. Staff also write National Register of Historic Places nominations and advise SHPO staff on Michigan Historical Markers for archaeological sites. Staff provide

expertise to federal agencies and tribal governments that need information about Michigan archaeology. The OSA also works closely with state agencies, especially the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Transportation, to ensure that archaeological sites are protected from damage, or are at least partially excavated prior to being damaged. The State Archaeologist works with DNR to manage the state's historic shipwrecks, and to conduct archaeological surveys for state parks.

The OSA provides training and employment opportunities to university students enrolled in museum studies and anthropology programs. Undergraduates can earn college credits through internships, or gain experience as volunteers. Graduate students are sometimes hired to assist with the state archaeological site file and collections curation. Collections and records can be used by students for thesis and dissertation research. The OSA also works with Michigan Historical Museum staff on K-12 education programs.

The OSA's mission is to study and protect our archaeological heritage for future generations. As our state's population and economy grow, fragile archaeological sites are being destroyed by development, and shipwrecks are being stripped of artifacts by those interested only in their own gain. Once gone, our past cannot be replaced. The OSA is working to ensure that archaeological sites, collections and publications will carry the



story of Michigan's people into the next millennium.

For more information contact the Office of the State Archaeologist, Michigan Historical Center, 717 West Allegan, Lansing, Michigan 48918-1800, 517/373-6358. Visit our web site: [www.sos.state.mi.us/history/archeol/index.html](http://www.sos.state.mi.us/history/archeol/index.html).

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#### PHOTOS:

Cover, Doctor's House excavation, Fayette State Park,  
by John R. Halsey;  
inside, a diver explores the *R. J. Hackett*, collection of the  
University of Wisconsin Sea Grant;  
Late Archaic projectile point, by Robert Kingsley.

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